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The purpose of this preliminary study was to identify small informal groups of teenage American Indian boys at a Bureau of Indian Affairs boarding school, in order to help determine if the school's declared objective of cultural integration were being met. The sociometric instrument chosen was disguised as a civil defense planning questionnaire and administered to 350 Indian high school boys living in 1 dormitory. Results indicated a possible inverse relationship between degree of acculturation and tribal identity, as manifested by intragroup associations. A tentative conclusion was that there might be an indirect relationship between acculturation (as measured by the degree of intertribal friendship choices) and geographical isolation of the students' homes. The appendix in the document contains the Disaster Emergency Planning Questionnaire. (JAM)

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Tribal Identity in Natural Groups of Indian Boys

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Tribal Identity in Natural Groups of Indian Boys

The purpose of this study was to identify small informal groups of teenage American Indian boys at a Bureau of Indian Affairs boarding school. The subjects were selected from high school aged boys in a school representing 95 Indian tribes residing in the continental United States and Alaska. Among the criteria for attendance at this school are extreme isolation of the students' family and an inability by the student to adjust to a mixed-culture public school if such a school is available. Tribal identity is apparently a salient factor in such culturally isolated families. A declared objective of the Indian school studied is an integration of tribal as well as Anglo-American and Indian cultural values. As a means of identifying the students' dominant value orientations the tribal affiliations of their reference group of peers is considered indicative.

The Problem

The problem was to identify small informal (natural) groups as they exist within a substantial segment of the student body and to note the relationships in these groups to tribal identities. The most reliable way to identify these natural groups would be to use non-participant observation (Sherif & Sherif, 1964). Due to time limitations and a lack of trained observers of American Indian ethnic background, this method was not feasible for the present study. Direct questionnaires, overtly solicited sociograms, or other methods, obvious to the subjects, for identifying natural groups were undesirable. Informal groups, especially those made up of teenage boys, will ordinarily not respond

appropriately to such procedures (Sherif, 1967). Therefore, a suitable disguised sociogram was developed and employed.

Method

The instrument chosen was one under development by M. K. MacNeil, Oklahoma State University, and one of the investigators (Appendix A). It had been pretested on a high school population with good results. Disguised as a civil defense planning questionnaire, it asks for skills and knowledge useful in emergencies and then covertly elicits multiple sociometric information which can be related to group membership, leadership, esteem, effective initiative, and trust. This instrument had had the preliminary approval of the state civil defense agency and the director of the Bureau of Indian Affairs school involved.

The subjects were 350 students, 10th, 11th, and 12th grade boys living in one dormitory. One of the investigators, during an assembly, introduced the questionnaire as one dealing with civil defense planning, stressing the idea that the interest of the investigators was in studying the methods of civil defense planning, rather than in actually setting up such a program at the school.

Because a hand sort of a large number of sociometric questionnaires is laborious and sometimes subject to inaccuracies, a program for computer application to this task was developed by one of the investigators, in collaboration with David M. Shoemaker, Oklahoma State University (Appendix B). This program, flexibly designed to handle sociometric information from any comparable source, was used in isolation informal groups among the students in the age groupd under consideration (Shoemaker & Pace, 1968).

Results

Out of approximately 340 questionnaires returned by the subjects, 241

contained enough usable sociometric information to warrant inclusion. Data generated, in the form of names and tribal identity, yielded lists of groups of boys from 46 tribes. Students whose questionnaires were not usable could still be plotted in groups, although not so reliably, from information found in other questionnaires. Tribal membership could be ascertained for all potential subjects from the school roster. Groups are defined as closed when all members made all their choices within the specific group.

Of the 46 tribes represented in the data from the questionnaires, only six had as many as eight students in the grade range 10 through 12. These tribes were Ponca, Blackfeet, Crow, Athabascan, Eskimo, and Navajo. Groups composed of students from these tribes will be considered in turn. The remaining 40 tribes had from one to seven members. Students from these tribes will only be mentioned in connection with their membership within groups composed of students from the six tribes with relatively large representation.

Ponca. There were eight Ponca students in the prescribed grade range, seven of whom filled out questionnaires. The seven were members of six widely overlapping, non-closed, groups composed of students from a number of different tribes. All but one of these Ponca students were at least peripheral members of two or more groups in the dormitory.

Blackfeet. There were seven Blackfeet students and another, part Blackfeet and part Cree. The Blackfeet-Cree student was a member of a group otherwise composed of Crows. Three Blackfeet had no questionnaires but the remaining four were members of a completely closed group composed of themselves and one Flathead. In this intertribal mixture there is an indication of geographical influence.

Crows. Out of 14 Crow students among the subjects there were two overlapping groups, including 12 Crows and a few non-Crow members. These groups were not

clearly separable by the sociometric techniques used. Two Crow students did not fill out questionnaires and were not chosen by anyone in the school.

Athabascan. Among the 16 Athabascan youths there was one completely closed group of five members. Another group consisted of three Athabascans. Three were members of two overlapping groups not predonimantly Athabascan. Five Athabascans had no questionnaire and could not be traced to any group.

Eskimos. Out of 58 Eskimo students in this age group there were four all-Eskimo groups. Two groups of four and six members respectively were completely closed. Two other groups, totaling 16 members, had some common members from the periphery of each group. A fifth group was nearly closed, with eight Eskimos and one Seminole from Florida. One non-member (i.e., the selected student chose no one in the group) was mentioned by this group, an Eskimo who was likewise mentioned by a number of members of other Eskimo and non-Eskimo groups.

Navajos. The Navajos have by far the largest tribal representation, and the results from this tribe are perhaps the most striking. Not one of the Navajo subjects made choices outside their tribe and none were chosen by non-Navajos. Of the 139 Navajos in the prescribed grades at the school, 92 were directly accounted for. There were six completely closed Navajo groups and eleven more, all identifiable groups, with some overlapping in membership.

Discussion

The relatively small return of usable sociometric information (241 questionnaires out of 340 administered) is possibly, to some extent at least, a result of both inter-cultural communication difficulties and a reticence typical of natural groups of teenage boys in any culture.

The results of this preliminary study indicate that there may be an

indirect relationship between acculturation (as measured by the degree of inter-tribal friendship choices) and geographical isolation of the students' homes. This conclusion is only tentative, however, because of a confounding of relevant factors.

Due to the selection process, the more isolated the boy's home the more likely he is to attend the school. This results in a larger number of students from the more isolated tribes and thus more freedom of choice by a boy of friends from within his own tribe. Furthermore, geographical proximity of st students' homes to each other allows for the possibility of friendships having been already established upon arrival at the school. One closed Eskimo group, for example, was composed of four boys, all from the same town in Alaska.

Similarly, no definite conclusions can be drawn from the data collected for the tribes with small representation (one to seven students) because these students, if group members at all, are almost forced into groups composed of non-own-tribe members. Further research is necessary to explore the possibility that there may be a tendency for members of tribes with highly similar culture bases (e.g., Plains Indians) to group more frequently than those of non-similar bases.

Conclusion

This study was undertaken to discover intratribal and intertribal patterns in small informal groups in a multitribal population of Indian high school boys. Results indicate a possible inverse relationship between degree of acculturation and tribal identity, as manifested by intragroup associations. The use of a disguised sociogram in the cross-cultural population provided multiple socio-metric choices as a basis for identifying peer groups. The data generated lent themselves to a computer analysis developed for the purpose.

References

Sherif, M. Social interaction. Chicago: Aldine, 1967.

Sherif, M., & Sherif, Carolyn. Reference groups. New York: Harper & Row, 1964.

Shoemaker, D. M., & Pace, Dorothy. Computer program for analysis of sociometric data. Behavioral Science, in press.

Appendices

Appendix A

DISASTER EMERGENCY PLANNING QUESTIONNAIRE

Many kinds of disasters might strike towns around this area. Hurricanes, tornadoes, floods, fires, even enemy atomic attack, possibly followed by invasion. When disaster hits a city or town the people living there are disorganized, many are injured, and the best help comes from places outside the damaged area.

Police, National Guard, and other agencies have most of the adult males in their services. There is, however, a largely unused source of emergency manpower--teenage boys.

This questionnaire is to find out what emergency units might be available in this area if the teenage boys were used.

Please answer all questions carefully. No one will ever see your answers except the disaster planning director. It will not be seen by school teachers, school officials, or anyone else.

DISASTER EMERGENCY PLANNING QUESTIONNAIRE

NAME_____

ADDRESS_____

_____

TELEPHONE #_____

When you are not in school or at home, where can you most likely be reached?

_____

_____

1. Would you be willing to help if you were needed in an emergency?

2. Do you have a driver's license?

3. If so what types of vehicles have you driven (tractor, truck, car, motor scooter, etc.)?

4. Do you have your own (or share with brother or sister) car, motor scooter, etc.?

5. When you are out with friends, how often do you drive? (¼, ½, 3/4 of the time?)

6. Do you know how to swim?

7. Do you hold any of the Red Cross life saving certificates? Which ones?

8. Have you had Red Cross training in first aid?

9. List Cub Scout, Boy Scout, or Explorer Scout merit awards you have earned which might be useful in a crisis.

10. List any other skills you may have which would be valuable in an emergency. (Carpenter work, driving a boat, ham radio operation, etc.)

11. Do you have camping equipment? Check which ones.

small tent _____
bed roll _____
cooking gear _____
flash light _____
lantern _____
battery radio _____

12. Do you often go hunting, camping, etc., with friends?

13. Are you skilled in the use of a gun, knife, or other weapon? (List the weapons.)

14. Could you survive off the land, supplying your own food, water, and shelter?

15. a. Had you rather do so alone or with a group of friends?

b. Which friends? List them in the order you would choose them.

16. If the disaster were caused by atomic bombing followed by enemy invasion, would you want to serve in an underground resistance, spying, and sabotage unit?

17. Have you had judo, karate, or boxing training? List which ones.

18. Have you ever had to defend yourself with weapons? With fists?

19. Do you ever fight your friends? Just for fun? Serious fights?

20. If the disaster were caused by atomic bombing, followed by enemy invasion, who among your friends would you pick to work with you as a sabotage team. List them.

21. Who among your friends get your plans and activities started and see that things get done?

First one_____

Second one_____

Others_____

_____

22. Are there any of the fellows you run around with that you would <u>not</u> like to have in the resistance unit with you? If so, list them.

23. Which of your friends do you consider the bravest?

24. Who would you pick to be the leader of the small group of half a dozen or so boys you would be with?

25. Would he choose you if he picked two fellows to help with the planning?

26. Who would you pick to be the lieutenants? Name two?

_____

_____

27. In a situation of extreme secrecy, who would you trust among your friends? List in the order of the most trusted first, the next one second, etc.

Appendix B

ABSTRACT

A Fortran IV Program for Analysis of Sociometric Data

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and

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Description: With responses to sociometric items as input, the computer program is designed to locate cliques within a larger group structure and to rank-order individuals within cliques if individual selections have been differentially weighted. The algorithm employed is one in which each individual is used as a starting point in generating a subgroup specific to him. Cliques are then determined through a concatenation of similar subgroups. Through manipulation of parameters it is also possible to locate cliques within cliques.

Capacity: The program is written for an IBM 7040 computer with 32K storage and is designed to process 800 individuals each making at maximum 10 sociometric selections per question. However, the program may be easily modified to process additional individuals by decreasing the maximum number of sociometric selections per person.

Availability: A copy of the Fortran IV source listing and a more detailed write-up may be obtained from David M. Shoemaker, Psychology Department, Oklahoma State University, Stillwater, Oklahoma, 74074.